

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DATE: OCTOBER 26, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TAYLOR
BELDEN
CHAMPAGNE
STEC
SOKOL
PITKIN

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR MERLINO

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING WARREN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION:
LEONARD FOSBROOK, PRESIDENT
JOHN WHEATLEY, PROJECT MANAGER, QUEENSBURY INDUSTRIAL PARK
PATRICIA TATICH, DIRECTOR OF THE PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
PATRICIA NENNINGER, SECOND ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISOR TESSIER
SUPERVISOR THOMAS
MIKE BORGOS, PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
BLAKE JONES, *THE POST STAR*
CHARLENE DiRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Taylor called the meeting of the Planning & Community Development Committee to order at 10:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Len Fosbrook, President of the Warren County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Fosbrook reported that there had been a front page article in *The Post Star* that highlighted the EDC's efforts to promote winter tourism in Warren County. He said that tourism was 25% of Warren County's total economy and that the County had the ability to have an impact on the percentage. He explained that the County had a well funded Tourism Department and contracted with the EDC to provide economic development. He stated that the EDC had been working closely with the Tourism Department to enhance tourism in the off season. He advised that he had met with the managers of West Mountain Ski Resort, Gore Mountain Ski Resort and Hickory Hill Ski Center; Peter Girard, Creative Director of the Warren County Tourism Department; Luisa Craige-Sherman, Executive Director of the Warren County Council of Chambers; and Chairman Monroe at a lunch meeting to discuss winter tourism in Warren County.

Mr. Fosbrook stated that in 2002 when Warren County had received Empire Zone certification, the EDC wanted to support the initiative to increase four season tourism in Warren County. He added that they had worked with the following eight hotels to assist them in receiving certification:

- The Fort William Henry Resort in Lake George, New York;
- The Hampton Inn & Suites in Lake George, New York;
- The Country Inn and Suites in Lake George, New York;
- The Alpine Lodge in North Creek, New York;
- The Wingate Inn in Lake George, New York;
- The Great Escape Lodge & Water Park in Lake George, New York;
- The Sagamore Resort in Lake George, New York; and
- The Queensbury Hotel in Queensbury, New York.

Mr. Fosbrook said that they were currently working on the certification for The Copperfield Inn in North Creek, New York. He apprised that the EDC had commissioned a study to determine if the Gore Mountain Ski Bowl could be connected to the Gore Mountain Ski Area itself. He added that the purpose had been to bring skiing to North Creek to assist with the revitalization. He apprised that they had been working on the infrastructure since 2002 and were now working on the marketing. He stated that this was the first time that there were three ski resorts working together as opposed to competing. He explained that the meeting that they had regarding winter tourism had focused on increasing skier visits, extending the length of stay of the skiers and promoting the other activities in Warren County to those who came here to ski. He said that they had discussed developing new activities such as destination sleigh rides.

Mr. Fosbrook expounded that Mike Pratt, of Gore Mountain Ski Resort, was tracking the skier visits to determine where the skiers came from. He said that Mr. Pratt had advised that there was a large increase in the number of skiers from the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. He added that Kate Johnson, Director of Tourism, would investigate the possibility of increasing the advertisements in the Philadelphia area to promote the winter season. He stated that both West Mountain Ski Resort and Gore Mountain Ski Resort hosted a significant number of ski competitions each year. He added that the competitors came from all over to compete in the races. He said that the EDC intended to use the ski competitions to increase recreational ski visits. He added that they would monitor their success by tracking occupancy tax and sales tax collections in the winter months. He apprised that the EDC would host an introductory event at the Queensbury Hotel on December 3, 2009 to promote winter tourism in Warren County. Mr. Taylor asked what the financial impact would be to the County if the program was successful and Mr. Fosbrook replied that they had not projected the figures.

Mr. Fosbrook said that he and Jennifer Switzer, Financial Director and Empire Zone Specialist of the EDC, had attended the Empire Zone Annual Conference in Watkins Glen on October 5-6, 2009. He stated that the history of the Empire Zone Program and the expectations for the future were discussed. He voiced his opinion that the Empire Zone Program had been a good program; however, he added, the program would not be renewed when it expired in June 2010. He explained that the EDC was working with other agencies to get a new similar program in place before the Empire Zone Program expired. He said that the new program would have to be competitive with other states and be simple and understandable, with regard to what the benefits were. He added that the program would also need to have a quick approval process

and be stable and devoid of politics. He advised that at the conference he, along with the representatives for the Essex and Hamilton County EDC, had made a pitch that there could not be just one program for the entire State because the communities within the blue line had specific needs. Mr. Sokol asked what would happen to the businesses that were still owed money once the Empire Zone Program expired. Mr. Fosbrook replied that there were no definitive answers but the money should be paid. He added that Empire State Development had asked the State Department of Taxation and Finance to give them a definitive answer.

Mr. Fosbrook apprised that the former Armory on Warren Street in the City of Glens Falls had been put up for auction by the Office of General Services (OGS) last week with a minimum bid of \$500,000. He said there had been one registered bidder who had not placed a bid. He reminded the Committee that an interested party had previously bid on the property and OGS had refused the offer saying the amount was insufficient. He advised that the EDC had purchased the parcel of land next door in anticipation of the sale of the former Armory parcel. Mr. Taylor asked if there was anything the Board of Supervisors could do to help expedite the sale of the parcel. Mr. Fosbrook responded that as soon as the EDC determined the best course of action they would request a resolution of support from the Board of Supervisors.

John Wheatley, Project Manager, Queensbury Industrial Park, apprised that the EDC had partnered with National Grid to facilitate their economic development programs. He said that the EDC had received grant awards of approximately \$500,000, which included seven Main Street Grant awards. He added that 100% of the Main Street Grant awards were for the redevelopment of dilapidated structures and unutilized properties. He said that they were matching fund grants that were judged on a combination of the number of jobs that would be created, the total amount of investment and the ability to act as a catalyst for additional activity within the neighborhood. He advised that the EDC had also accessed the Shovel-Ready Grant for Queensbury Business Park and they had been awarded two Strategic Marketing Grants. He expounded that National Grid was instituting a loan program for energy efficiency for small businesses. He added that the program was for 70% reimbursement for systems or equipment upgraded for energy efficiency.

Brief discussion ensued.

This concluded the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) portion of the Committee meeting and the Planning & Community Development portion began at 10:56 a.m.

Mike Borgos, President of the Local Development Corporation, entered the meeting at 10:57 a.m.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Patricia Tatich, Director of the Planning & Community Development Department, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Tatich requested authorization for the GIS (Geographic Information System) Coordinator to attend the SUNY (State University of New York) ESF Conference for GIS in Lake Placid, New York, at a cost of \$175 for registration with no cost to the County for mileage or lodging. She said that the funds were available in the Department's budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Pitkin, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously to authorize the GIS Coordinator to attend the Conference as outlined above. *A copy of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Tatich informed the Committee that they had submitted a grant application for the amount of \$32,259.10 to the New York State Department of State to conduct activities related to the 2010 Census Complete Count Program. She added that the amount requested would be used to defray the cost of personnel services. She said that funding announcements were anticipated by the end of the year.

Ms. Tatich stated that the next item on the agenda was to update the Committee on the Broadband Needs Analysis and Design Engineering Study. She advised that individual interviews were being conducted by Robert Panoff, of Stratum Broadband, in consultation with CBN Connect to determine the specific needs of potential users. She apprised that Washington County would hold their initial "kick off" meeting on Wednesday, October 28, 2009 at 11:00 a.m. at the Washington County Municipal Center. She added that members of the Warren County Board of Supervisors were invited to attend. She noted that the study was on schedule.

Ms. Tatich informed the Committee that the Office of Community Renewal held a workshop for the next round of funding for the Community Development Block Grant Program in Lake Placid, New York on October 22, 2009. She added that Planning & Community Development staff had been in attendance to receive information on program submission requirements. She advised that the application submission would be in April 2010 and added that the communities should begin to identify potential projects.

Referring to the Broadband Study, Mr. Champagne asked when the Federal Economic Stimulus Funding for broadband would be available. Ms. Tatich said that the Department was hopeful that they would be ready to receive funds for construction. She added that an application had been submitted for the Upstate Blueprint Fund from New York State for more detailed engineering design work. Mr. Champagne asked when construction would begin and Ms. Tatich replied that construction would most likely begin in fall 2011 or spring 2012.

Discussion ensued.

Continuing with the agenda review, Ms. Tatich said that the next item for discussion was the Alternative B plan that would allow the Planning & Community Development Department to retain its current staffing level but had been declined by the Budget Committee. She advised that she had included further information in the agenda packet, as well as a copy of the memo to the Local Development Corporation (LDC) which explained the request for a contribution to assist in funding the position of the Small Business Specialist.

Ms. Tatich reminded the Committee that they had discussed the three alternative plans at the September 28, 2009 Committee meeting and the Committee had chosen Alternative B. She advised that in devising the alternatives, she had looked for additional revenue streams and had identified \$130,524. She added that Alternative B also requested \$31,840 as a contribution from the LDC for small business services provided by the Small Business Specialist, which would be discussed at the LDC immediately following the Committee meeting. She explained that the amount of \$31,840 had been derived based on the 15 hours per month spent working

on the Small Business Program. She said that a balance of \$440,000 was anticipated for program activities and \$185,000 would be encumbered for the Hudson Headwaters Health Center loan. She added that would leave a \$225,000 balance for program activities and the \$31,840 was less than 15% of the balance. She said that if Alternative B was chosen, the financial scenario would be likely to continue for 2011.

Patricia Nenninger, Second Assistant County Attorney, said that she and Ms. Tatich had been discussing Alternative B over the past few weeks. She stated that the presentation made by Ms. Tatich recognized that the program income was a grant administration requirement under the original grant. She advised that the County did not possess a letter or release from the State or the Federal Government as to those funds. She added that they had historically applied the grant administration requirement to the LDC funds. She apprised that Alternative B recognized and met the requirements. She stated that the LDC would need to review and decide if in the process of meeting all of the requirements, there would still be sufficient funding for the LDC to meet its existing purpose to provide community renewal development activities.

Mr. Champagne asked if the Committee would take action on the issue at a later meeting after the LDC had made a decision. Mr. Taylor responded that he was unsure if the Committee would have time to meet again prior to the next Budget Committee meeting. He added that it had been indicated that the tentative budget needed to be submitted no later than November 15, 2009. He reminded the Committee that they had selected Alternative B and it had been rejected by the Budget Committee. He voiced his opinion that it was vital to have a fully staffed Planning Department, especially when times were tough. He stated that the Department managed \$4.2 million in grants and there would be an increase in revenue of approximately \$130,000 if they chose Alternative B. He asked for the Committee's support to Alternative B as opposed to elimination of a staff member.

Discussion ensued pertaining to Alternative B.

Ms. Tatich apprised that she had received from Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, a notification from the Office of Community Renewal pertaining to the audit for the period ending December 31, 2008. She said that there were some items that needed clarification or correction that would need to emanate from the Treasurer's Office. Mrs. Sady reported that she had received a response from Rob Lynch, Deputy Treasurer, saying that he would contact the auditors and would inform her once the matter was rectified.

Mr. Taylor said that the Planning Department should be about more than just applying for and administering grants, they should get involved with planning for the future of the County. He expounded that comments had been made that the Municipal Center was on valuable commercial property and the County would do just as well if the building were elsewhere. He added that there was a large amount of land between the Municipal Center Building and Route 9 and suggested that portions of the land could be sold to commercial developers. He advised that the Planning Department could assist the County in researching the concept. Mr. Champagne replied that attempts to sell other County-owned property on Route 9 had been unsuccessful. Mr. Pitkin stated that he felt the concept was worthy of research.

Mr. Champagne asked if a decision had been reached pertaining to Alternative B. Mr. Taylor

responded that the Committee would need to wait to determine the decision of the LDC. Mrs. Nenninger said there was \$10,000 that Warren County would be providing for administrative services to the LDC and \$31,840 would represent administrative services provided by Warren County. Ms. Tatich expounded that the funding sources used two terms: administrative services and implementation. She explained that the Block Grant Program allowed 15% for administrative services, such as audits and other basic operations. The grants also listed implementation amounts, she added, which was for program activities. Ms. Tatich advised that the Department had never accessed the administrative services portion of the grants in the past, choosing to retain more funding for program activities.

Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Champagne asked which grant programs would not be completed if the County eliminated the Assistant Director of Planning position. Ms. Tatich responded that there were some grant programs which could not be completed and grant programs that did get completed would depend on the experience of the remaining employees.

There being no further business to come before the Planning & Community Development Committee, on motion by Mr. Stec and seconded by Mr. Belden, Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist